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Roman Rustic Religion

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St. Andrew-on-Hudson

It has often been observed that, when poets like Virgil and Horace, Tibullus and Ovid speak of the country and its simple pieties, they do so in a tone of great sympathy and affection. While towards the State-cult and the Graeco-Roman gods they show a formal, conventional reverence, their hearts go out with unreserved devotion to the old animistic religion of the countryside. They love to recall the spirits of field and woodland and herd, the age-old festivals of the *di agrestes*, the curious details of the ancient cults. Nor is this strange. For all these poets had been born and bred in the country; they knew and loved the *boni agricolae bonique coloni* whom old Cato had praised; and they found there what they missed in the great city, genuine *religio* and *pietas*, that feeling of awe in the presence of higher powers and that spirit of devotion which had in the past helped to mould the men and manners that had made Rome mistress of the world.

This religion of the countryside had, as they realized, a long and venerable past. And it is an interesting task to try to trace it down the centuries from its earliest beginnings to the days of Augustus. True it is that we can see those early days of Fauns and Dryads and old Silvanus only through a thick mist. But, as centuries pass, the mist lifts a little and we can see the general outlines clearly enough. To guide our steps we have certain helps: archaeology, the so-called Calendar of Numa, Cato the censor, antiquarians like Varro, and finally the poets.

During the early centuries of the iron age (about 1000-700 B.C.), the ancestors of the Latins came into Italy from the north and settled villages west of the Apennines in the region we know as Latium. The tribes lived on agriculture and pasturage and in the earlier times enjoyed comparative peace. About 800 B.C. the first Roman village was settled on the Palatine. Later came Sabines and Etruscans until, about 650 B.C., the villages of several hills of Rome united into one city. So much we learn from archaeology. Of the religion of these primitive Latins archaeology can give us little definite information. Warde Fowler, believing that "the religion of the family remained the same in all essentials throughout Roman history," paints a vivid picture of what the religion of family and *pagus* must have been in those early centuries.¹ However that may be, the first fairly definite idea we get of early Roman religion is derived from the old Calendar, imbedded in the later *Fasti* of imperial days. This Calendar, ascribed by later Romans to the priest-king Numa, dates back to the mid-sixth century B.C. or even earlier. It gives in large capitals a list of

forty-five festivals with the days on which they fall, noting the religious character of these days. From this old document, which Mommsen calls "the most ancient source of our knowledge about Roman antiquities generally," we can put together a fairly clear picture of the religion of Rome in the days of the kings, at a period of transition from the life of a people engaged in agricultural and pastoral pursuits, to a highly organized political and military mode of life.² The story in brief is as follows.

THE CALENDAR OF NUMA

From the long series of festivals that succeed one another month by month, it is evident that agriculture and war were the chief occupations at this period. March and October are given over to rites connected with war, while most of the other festivals reflect the processes and perils of agricultural life. Take April for instance, when crops and cattle were growing. On the 15th occurred the *Fordicidia*, the first of many festivals concerned with the growth, ripening, and harvest of the crops. Then on the 19th came the *Cerealia*, in honor of Ceres, an old Italian spirit who presided over the generative processes of nature.³ On the 21st followed the *Parilia*, in honor of Pales, a simple spirit of the pasture lands. On the 25th was held the *Robigalia* to propitiate Robigus, the spirit who worked mischief in the red mildew—no doubt a formidable scourge to Italian farmers who depended so much on home-grown corn.

Passing over the months from May to July, we come to August, the month of vintage and harvest-festivals, when (among others) *Consus* and *Ops*, the spirits of the stored harvest and the wealth of the corn, received their due. Finally December was a slack month when the farmer had time for many a holiday connected with the earth and vegetation. On the 5th was held the rustic *Faunalia*, of which Horace has given us a charming description.⁴ Faunus was a freakish spirit of woodland and herds who could play pranks and do harm, but who was ready to do good if duly propitiated. And so the farmers entice him into kindness with kid and wine and incense. In this month we meet another festival to *Consus* and *Ops*, probably to insure the well-being of the corn-stores. On the 17th came a festival to *Saturnus*, an old Italian agricultural spirit who later on was to win fame in legend as the first king of Latium and representative of the Golden Age. In fine, of the forty-five festivals, a large number have some relation to agriculture.

This Calendar, combined with later information, gives us some glimpses of the spirits worshipped by the early Latins. To begin with, some were so dim and shadowy that later Roman did not know who were the objects of certain rites. Ovid for instance is often perplexed.

Clearly, then, their ideas about the powers were indistinct; the *cult* made an appeal to them as a practical method of realizing their desires, but the power behind the cult was beyond their ken; its name and sex were often a mystery to them; it was merely conceived as a *force* dwelling in a particular place as a spring or stone or grove. These were local *numina* like Janus and Terminus. Often too they were thought of in groups like Fauns, Lares or nymphs. Gradually, however, certain spirits were connected with special functions or activities which they could exercise everywhere. Thus Ceres and Liber worked in the corn, Robigus in the mildew, while Pales guarded the flocks. Finally, some few spirits had, from time immemorial, developed a special individuality and wideness of function so that, by the time of the Calendar, they were rather personal *dei* than vague, impersonal *numina*. Such were Mars, an old Italian agricultural spirit who early became also a god of war, and Jupiter, the common sky-god of the Indo-Germanic peoples. In general, these powers were thought of as friendly, if properly appeased, and the rites of propitiation were normally sacrifice and prayer. Magical charms and spells survive, but they are kept in the background. So what we glimpse in the Calendar is really a religious attitude, an effective desire to be in friendly relations with the powers manifesting themselves in the world of man.

The dreary story how this old religion of the Italian farmers was gradually transformed and deadened in the city by the State-cult and the introduction of foreign deities during the days of the Republic does not concern us here. During the dark days of the war with Hannibal, *tanta religio*, says Livy, *et ea magna ex parte externa, civitatem incessit, ut aut homines aut di repente alii viderentur facti*. With the bringing of the Magna Mater (a black stone) from Pessinus in 205 B.C., came the death knell of the old religion, and even Augustus could not breathe the real life into its moribund frame.

CATO AND RELIGION IN THE COUNTRY

But in the country districts the old rites still persisted as of yore. This we might infer from their survival even into Christian times. But happily we can cite old Cato (234-149 B.C.) as a potent witness to their vitality. Brought up in the Sabine country near Reate, this stern old Roman loved the soil as he loved Rome. In a crowded life he yet found time to compose a kind of farmer's manual, the *De Agricultura*, which gives us an authentic picture of old Roman life and religion just after the Hannibalic war when Rome was winning the world and losing her soul. In his notes for the farmer the chief items are hard work and religious observances. Cato might well have been Virgil's model farmer as he wrote the *Georgics*.

When, says Cato, the master first comes to the farmstead, let him pay his respects to the household god, then inspect the farm. In his directions to the overseer, he tells him not to perform any religious rites except at the Compitalia or before the hearth, nor must he meddle with fortune-tellers or other quacks. The *vilica* or housekeeper must hang a wreath over the hearth on Kalends, Nones, Ides, and other holydays. But Cato is old-fashioned enough to believe in charms and spells for the cure

of diseases and in lucky days. When the day comes for the cattle to be turned out to pasture in the woods, he prescribes an offering to Mars Silvanus. Before the spring ploughing an offering must be made to Jupiter Dapalis for the health of the oxen, and both prayer and offering are given in exact terms. Here it is interesting to note, with Fowler, that "in Cato we find the only unquestionably genuine old prayers used at sacrifice, taken from the books of the pontifices word for word."⁶ Before harvest the *porca praecedanea* must be offered to Ceres, while prayers and other offerings are given to Janus, Jupiter and Juno. Evidently Cato believed that in multiplicity there was strength. The prayer to Janus runs as follows: "Father Janus, in offering these cakes, I humbly beg that thou wilt be gracious and merciful to me and my children, my house and household." It is the language of real prayer; man recognizes his dependence on these powers and begs the blessing of the gods on himself and all he holds dear: *precor uti sis volens propitius*.

Is a new clearing to be made in a grove? That was a serious business, as no one knew what spirits, dwelling in the woods, might be roused to rage; be it Mars or Faunus or Silvanus. So Cato gives the proper ritual to be followed: a pig must be sacrificed and the following prayer recited: "Whether thou be god or goddess to whom this grove is sacred, as it is thy right to receive the sacrifice of a pig for the thinning of this sacred grove . . ." Then only could one go on with the work with a clear conscience. Late in May, when crops were maturing, took place the most stately of all rustic rites, the Ambarvalia or religious procession around the land to purify the crops from evil influences. A bull, sheep and pig (*suovetaurilia*) were led about the fields three times by a crowd who carried olive branches and chanted as they went. Before the sacrifice a solemn prayer was offered to Mars. This antique prayer is worth quoting in detail as it faithfully reflects the oldest type of genuine Italian worship: "Father Mars, I pray and beseech thee to be gracious and propitious to me, my household and my slaves; to which intent I have bidden this threefold sacrifice to be led around my land, my ground, my farm, that thou keep away, ward off, and turn from us all disease, seen or unseen, all desolation, ruin, damage and unseasonable influence, and that thou give increase to fruits, corn, vines and plantations, and bring them to prosperous issue, preserve in health my shepherds and my flocks, and give good health and strength to me, my house, and household." This prayer is painfully explicit and exact; it breathes anxiety (*religio*) lest anything be left unsaid which should be said. But it is a real petition, not a magic formula, to powers on whom one depends for a livelihood.

To sum up our impressions of Cato, in him we catch sight of a religious spirit quite different from that of the State-cult of his day. The deities he worships are all old Italian or Latin spirits, not foreign ones.⁷ The spiritual attitude is one of *religio* and *pietas*, a feeling of dependence on the powers and a deep desire to be at peace with them. The ritual of prayer and sacrifice is simple, but reverent and decorous. Finally it is a *personal* religion in which all, old and young, free and

slave, take part. Antique notions persist: some spirits are unnamed and undefined: *si deus, si dea*; their personalities seem still shadowy and untouched by poetic legends. Magic survives but not prominently in the rites. Such was the religion, thought Virgil and Horace and Livy, that had bred a Cincinnatus, a Fabricius, a Regulus, and a Cato. More than a century after Cato, Varro wrote a work on agriculture. But it is secular, not religious in tone. So it is to the poets we must now turn to see how religion fared in the country which they all loved so dearly.

Of Lucretius we need say nothing as he scorned the traditional beliefs. Nor will Catullus detain us long. The goddess he worshipped had taken on flesh and dwelt on the Palatine, until one day . . . His "Hymn to Diana" shows clearly what has happened to many old Italic deities. For his Diana is a blend of the Grecian Artemis and the old Italian spirit of woods and groves:

tu cursu dea menstruo
metiens iter annuum
rustica agricolae bonis
tectis frugibus explēs.

VIRGIL'S RUSTIC RELIGION

But with Virgil we return to the rustic religion. "If," says Cyril Bailey, "there is any one passion in Virgil's life of which we may feel certain, it is his devotion to the Italian country-side and the farmer's life . . . And in this strong feeling for the country religion plays a large and vital part."⁸ In his *Georgics*, while he preaches the gospel of hard work, he insists no less on the primacy of religion: *in primis venerare deos*. *Laborare et orare* sum up for him the farmer's creed. In Virgil's eyes, the divine forces are everywhere, and a man must submit himself to them and seek their aid. But, unlike the grim toiler of Hesiod, the *agricola* of the *Georgics* works with cheerful heart, for he feels in right relation with the powers which rule his life.⁹ In spirit, then, the *Georgics* are redolent of the old rustic religion which we have seen in the Calendar and in Cato, with their forceful *numina* ready to aid man if duly honored. It is true that Virgil sees these old spirits through a mist of Greek legend. But see them he does, Fauns and Dryads and old Silvanus. And with his imagination, his heart went out to the *di agrestes* and those

dique deaque omnes, studium quibus arva tueri.

He had early fallen under the spell of Lucretian philosophy and still felt its power as he wrote his *Georgics*. But he also felt that there were more things in heaven and earth than were dreamt of in the philosophy of Lucretius:

fortunatus et ille deos qui novit agrestes.

He knows and loves the rustic rites of Cato and his forbears, one of which he describes in lovely lines (1.342-344):

cuncta tibi Cererem pubes agrestis adoret,
cui tu lacte favos et miti dilue Baccho,
terque novas circum felix eat hostia fruges . . .

And while the ancient *numina* are often overlaid by the more picturesque gods of Greek mythology, some instinct and memories of his boyhood lead him back

time after time to the old animistic spirits, and he dwells on these with a warm affection which he does not feel for the clear-cut figures of the Graeco-Roman pantheon.

In the great passage at the close of the Second *Georgics*—*o fortunatos*—he sums up the farmer's joys and rewards: settled content, sturdy character, a happy home-life, and the *sacra deum* which come round from season to season to cheer him as they had his ancestors in the days of the kings. In sum, then, poet though he was and steeped in Grecian legend and Lucretian philosophy, Virgil remained at heart an Italian, near the kin to Cato in his reverence for those rustic rites which still lived on in the "divine country."

HORACE

Horace, Virgil's friend, shared these feelings if less intensely and at rarer intervals. He too felt the charm and appeal of rustic piety as it manifested itself in the Sabine hills. Two Odes in particular bring this out. In one (3.18), there is a prayer to Faunus, the old shepherd-spirit who had with time inherited the attributes of the Greek Pan: "Faunus, lover of the fleeing nymphs, pass gently over my lands and sunny fields and bless my little yearlings as you leave." Then he pictures the rustic merrymaking:

Ludit herboso pecus omne campo,
Cum tibi Nonae redeunt Decembres;
Festus in prato vacat otioso
Cum bove pagus.

Here, as Fowler notes, "we are for a moment let into the heart and mind of ancient Italy as they showed themselves on a winter holiday. There is an ancient altar—not a temple—to a supernatural being who is not yet fully god, who can play pranks like the Brownies and do harm, but is capable of doing good if duly propitiated."¹⁰ To the Sabine farmer Faunus was still a half-wild spirit who must be coaxed into benevolence with sacrifice of tender kid and wine and incense. Horace saw the scene and felt its appeal.

Again, in the Ode to *rustica* Phidyle (3.23), he catches the genuine spirit of the old religion. He tells Phidyle:

Caelo supinas si tuleris manus
Nascente luna, rustica Phidyle,
Si ture placaris et horna
Frugis Lares avidaque porca,

Nec pestilentem sentiet Africum
Fecunda vitis nec sterilem seges
Robiginem aut dulces alumi
Pomifera grave tempus anno.

We are back again in spirit to the days of Cato who instructs his *vilica* to hang a wreath on the hearth and pray to the household god on holidays. No need for Phidyle to mimic the pomp of the State-cult; simple offerings, even a handful of salted meal, will win the gods' blessing. It is a recall to old ideas of *pietas*: pure hands, an earnest heart, and simple offerings. So too Ovid often recalls the days of simple offerings: "Of old the means to gain the goodwill of the gods were spelt and sparkling grains of pure salt."¹¹

In the Ode to the Bandusian Spring, Horace once more enters into the spirit of the old animism when wells and springs were the haunts of *numina*. From these examples

and others we could cite it is clear that he knows and loves the old country religion. If he could not share in it with the naive faith of his Sabine neighbors, at least he could enter into its spirit with full imaginative and emotional sympathy. For he too felt the presence of spirits hovering about him and protecting him from harm:

Di me tuentur, dis pietas mea
Et Musa cordi est.

In Tibullus, a friend of Horace, we meet another love of the country and its religion. "No other poet," says Sellar, "with the exception of Virgil, is so possessed by the spirit of Italy, the love of the country and of the labour of the fields, and the piety associated with the sentiment."¹² While Virgil is generally reflective in mood, Tibullus is idyllic. In this mood he begins his first elegy: "Give me modest means, a cheerful home, the simple faith and simple toil of the countryside. I keep the proper rites and what I have I share with the rustic gods":

Nam veneror seu stipes habet desertus in agris
seu vetus in trivio florida sarta lapis;
Et quodeumque mihi pomum novus educat annus,
libatum agricolae ponitur ante deo.

And then he gives us one of those artfully artless pictures of country rites in which he excels. Ceres is there as in Virgil and the Lares and kindly Pales, sprinkled with milk to keep her benevolent, and all the gods are invited to be present and scorn not gifts from a humble board.

In another elegy (2.1) we have a beautiful description of the old ritual of the lustration of fields and crops:

fruges lustramus et agros
ritus ut a prisco traditus exstat avo.

It is a holiday for men and beasts, with a procession of white-clad folk to an altar where the sacrifice is to take place. And the poet puts into lovely verse the usual prayer for the welfare of crops and flocks:

Di patrii, purgamus agros, purgamus agrestes:
vos mala de nostris pellite limitibus . . .

Once again we are carried back in sentiment to Cato as he lustrated his fields and prayed his antique prayer, and beyond Cato to the early Latins who first performed this stately rite. Tibullus, we feel, was surely one of those *fortunati* who knew intimately and loved sincerely the country gods: *rura cano rurisque deos*. His ideal of happiness centers about the country (1.1.5-45); there he would be a shepherd and Delia a shepherdess (1.2.71-74); when sick at Coreyra he dreams of home and its pieties (1.3.33-36); when estranged from his *puella* he sadly muses on the life they might have lived together in the country (1.5.21). Behind all these idyllic dreams lay something very real, the memory of his happy childhood in the country near Pedum.

OVID'S "BEAUTY OF RITUAL"

"To penetrate to the heart of Roman worship in the times of Augustus," says Rand, "we should go to the poets, to Virgil for religious aspiration . . . to Ovid for the beauty of ritual."¹³ So we turn now to Ovid's *Fasti* and those "holy rites unearthed from annals old" which he describes with such unfailing charm. For Ovid too came from the country and like the other poets, he loves to recall the days when the farmers sat on long benches

before the fire and believed that the gods had a place at the table, and that meadow, grove, and stream were haunted by spirits:

Lucus Aventino suberat niger ilicis umbra,
quo posses viso dicere "numen inest."

Sometimes he romances about the past, giving full play to his lively imagination. But often too he gives us personal reminiscences of rites which he had seen or shared in, and here he is an authentic witness of the vitality of rustic religion in his day.

It were tempting to reproduce his description of the Day of Sowing (*Sementivae*), a movable feast in late January. But let us confine ourselves to three festivals of the old Calendar which Ovid, alone of the poets, describes in detail. On February 23rd, *Terminus*, "whether stone or stump buried in the fields," was honored as deity of the farmer's bounds (2.641, 642):

Termine, sive lapis, sive es defossus in agro
stipes, ab antiquis tu quoque numen habes.

Two landowners garlanded each his own side of the boundary-stone, and all offerings were double. The rites which follow are reminiscent of the simple days of old: the fire carried by the farmer's wife from hearth to altar, the fruits of earth shaken from a basket into the fire by a little daughter of the house, while the company looks on and holds its peace. After the sacrifice of lamb or pig there follows merrymaking with songs in the god's honor. These rites transport us back to the simplest, nay probably the root-phase of Roman animism, when a spirit was thought of as dwelling in an object or a special place.¹⁴ *Terminus*, it seems, remained just a local *numen* down the ages, "never contriving to extricate himself from his stone or stock."¹⁵ But in the following festivals we catch sight of a more enlightened phase of animism, when spirits were conceived as functional and not bound to a particular spot.

On April 25th *Robigus*, the spirit of the mildew, received his (or her) due. Ovid tells how he met the priest wending his way out to the grove of ancient Mildew to offer sacrifice. He joined the procession, noted the curious rites, and versified the prayer he heard (4.911, 912).

Aspera Robigo, parcas Cerialibus herbis,
et tremat in summa leve cacumen humo.

In substance, this prayer must go far back to the days when the Latins lived on the corn grown near the city. Before the days of imported corn, Mildew was a force to be feared and propitiated.

On April 21st was held the *Parilia*, to honor Pales, the spirit of flocks and herds. Her (or his) function was simple and clear down the centuries, and all the poets love her.¹⁶ Ovid had taken part in the rites. In the country, the sheepfold was decked with boughs and a wreath hung over the doorway. At daybreak the sheep were purified and Pales gifted with milk and millet. In the prayer to Pales, as given by Ovid (4.747), "the genuine spirit of Italian religion — the awe of the unknown, the fear of committing unwittingly some act that may bring down wrath upon you — is most vividly brought out, in spite of the Greek touches and names which are introduced":¹⁷

Pelle procul morbos; valeant hominesque gregesque,
et valeant vigiles, provida turba, canes.

Ovid, it is plain from the *Fasti*, if not a devout worshipper was at least an interested spectator of the rustic liturgy. And his poem "reflects the colors, gay and sombre, of the life of a people more deeply penetrated with religion than people are today."¹⁸

CONCLUSIONS

From this brief survey of Roman rustic religion we may draw certain conclusions. First of all, rural life in Latium and elsewhere was tenacious of these old rites and customs. We meet them already in the sixth-century Calendar; Cato is a witness that they were alive in his day; and the poets of Augustus' day show that they were thriving in their times. Secondly, we have caught a glimpse of the character of these rites and the spirits involved in them. There clings about them almost always the aura of the old local and functional *numina* of primitive times. Terminus and Robigus, Pales and Ceres still seem to remain for the farmers dim, shadowy conceptions so dear to the old Roman sense of awe, spirits working in special places or performing special functions, rather than clear-cut gods with a quasi-human history behind them. And the tone of the rustic ritual savors of a time when the Latin farmer believed, with a simple faith, that the yearly increase of his flocks and fields depended on the good-will and blessing of these secret, unearthly powers. Lastly, one feels that this was a personal religion wherein all, master and slave, old and young, were deeply concerned.

It is easy no doubt to criticise this religion as essentially practical and wanting in ethical value: give and take, pray and sacrifice, and no disease will visit your fold or mildew blight your corn. Again, their idea of the divine powers behind man's life was vague, while the multiplicity of their spirits tended to dissipate the religious sense. All this is true, but perhaps not the whole truth. It is hard to discover any direct moral effect of rustic religion on its worshippers. They did not pray for virtue; they thought more about pure hands than about a pure heart. Yet the indirect influence of this religion must have been considerable, binding the entire family together in a spiritual unity of common worship, establishing good relations between neighbors who saw in Terminus a divine sanction of the rights of property, and cementing the social bonds between all the members of a *pagus* who met in the rites at the *compita*. And if their ideas of the divine were blurred, at least they recognized powers above themselves, and this recognition bred a certain feeling of dependence on and reverence for these powers and a desire to be in right relations with them.

We must always remember that they were pagans without a prophet to guide their steps or a divine Teacher to open their eyes to the full truth. They had not yet heard words like those which their descendants would hear: "Be not solicitous for saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the heathen seek. For your Father knoweth that you have need of these things. Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6.31-33). Yet the picture of Roman rustic religion we have seen does not altogether lack color or warmth. What

it chiefly lacked, true knowledge of the divine and true spiritual inwardness, would come to it in the fullness of time from the East.

¹W. Warde Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People* (London, 1922), chap. 4. So far as I know, there is no complete account of Roman rural religion in English.

²Cf. also Franz Altheim, *A History of Roman Religion*, translated by H. Mattingly (London, 1938), chap. 2.

³In speaking of "old Italian" spirits and deities, I prescind from the question whether these were old native deities, unmixed with foreign ideas (so Wissowa, Fowler, Bailey, etc.), or—some of them at least—Greek deities who came to the Latins from Etruria or Campania in early times, as Altheim maintains.

⁴Horace C. 3.18. This festival is not included in the old Calendar as it was purely a rustic festival. But I include it here to complete the picture of ancient rustic rites since it is undoubtedly a very old feast.

⁵Livy 25.1, quoted by Fowler, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

⁶Fowler, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

⁷In the sense of Note 3. That is, they were deities of the old Calendar.

⁸C. Bailey, *Religion in Virgil* (Oxford, 1935), p. 29.

⁹Fowler, *op. cit.*, chap. 18 is excellent on Virgil's religious spirit.

¹⁰W. Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals* (London, 1899), p. 257.

¹¹*Fasti* 1.337; 4.409; Tibullus 1.137.

¹²W. Y. Sellar, *The Roman Poets of the Augustan Age; Horace and the Elegiac Poets* (Oxford, 1892), p. 329.

¹³E. K. Rand, *Ovid and his Influence* (Boston, 1925), p. 78.

¹⁴C. Bailey, *Phases in the Religion of Ancient Rome* (Berkeley, 1932), p. 40.

¹⁵J. G. Frazer, *P. Ovidii Nasonis Pastorum Libri Sex* (London, 1929), Vol. II, 481.

¹⁶Cf. *Georgics* 3.1 and 294; Propertius 4.1.19 and 4.4.75; Tibullus 1.1.36 and 2.5.87.

¹⁷Fowler, *Rom. Fest.*, p. 81.

¹⁸Rand, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

The Mote and the Beam

Peras imposuit Iuppiter nobis duas:
Propriis repletam vitis post tergum dedit.
Alienis ante pectus suspendit gravem.
Hac re videre nostra mala non possumus;
Alii simul delinquent, censores sumus.

Phaedrus 4.10.

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Editorial

From Latin to Latin in Latin

WRITTEN WORK FOR COMPREHENSION

We all agree that a Classical author is read in order to be understood. No other objective can be achieved without this rather elementary understanding. Ordinarily we tell whether our students grasp the thought content of an author by calling upon them for an English translation. No one denies the legitimacy of the process. It is traditional. It has produced results. But it isn't the only way of checking upon the student's comprehension; some suspect it isn't nearly the best. They say it fosters a system of transverbalization which decodes the Latin symbol into English equivalents, and from this latter the sense is derived. These instead insist that Latin should be understood as Latin, that students should get at the thought content directly in the Latin the way a Roman got at it, — just as we get at the thought in English Literature. For them the understanding of Latin as Latin remains an ideal, something constantly to be aimed at even from the first. The objective is as old as the Report of the Classical Investigation (page 188).

It is not our intention to take sides in the controversy between those who favor the "grammar-translation" method or the "Latin-as-Latin" method of teaching. It is after all not impossible to fuse traditional and objective methods in our teaching. They are not at odds, let alone mutually exclusive. Even so it will have to be agreed that, whatever the merits of grammatical analysis and translation, it is not the only way of coping with the problem of comprehension. And there are some real difficulties. In more extensive courses in reading, oral recitation cannot possibly cover all the matter. It is frankly impossible to require a high standard of English style in such work, when even an expert like Ronald Knox, who some months ago completed his work on the Vulgate, speaks of the time spent on the *magnum opus* as "ten hard years." For this reason hastily done English will ill achieve the much desired improvement in the student's handling of his mother tongue. Rather is translation a finishing process. It presupposes comprehension. It trains in expression, in idiomatic English. As such it wants to be written out carefully and needs as carefully

to be corrected. Such work should be done. It can hardly be done daily, because it takes more time than the teacher can spare habitually. And then there is the need for variety in our teaching.

After years of work in the class room, we kept casting about for some written work that would be practical for testing comprehension of Latin, always holding to the ideal of Latin as Latin... the way we understand English.

The way we understand English — that gave the clue to something of a solution. It took us back to the days spent in preparation for the London University Matriculation. Much stress was placed upon the comprehension of English. Without mastery here, failure was assured. One of our most regular exercises was frequent precis writing. Not a day passed without a passage in English precis, an M.P.'s speech, and editorial from the *Times*. We have since come to appreciate the wisdom of this daily discipline. So much stress was placed upon the precis because it represented one's ability to cope with a writer's mind. And after one has mastered the medium of communication, most education is largely a matter of self-education. The teacher can direct, or better still, he can inspire. But he is the instrumental cause, not the efficient cause of learning. That is why so much insistence was laid upon a man's ability to grasp thought through reading. The man who can do that can put his mind in contact with the first-rate minds that have survived the centuries. And nothing educates like contact with what is first-rate.

There is a good deal of wisdom too in the English way of speaking, of a student's "reading law", or "reading medicine", or "reading divinity". The concept behind the terminology is one of personal activity — a bit different from the notion that learning can be absorbed by a passive process of osmosis, provided one be exposed to it for a fixed number of class-hours.

Whatever the level at which we read Latin authors, whatever our more specific objectives, we've all of us got to admit that elementary comprehension is the *sine qua non* for success. And all controversy aside, the aim of comprehending Latin as Latin must remain an ideal. The problem is: how else (besides by translation, written and oral) shall we check our student's grasp of an author's mind? There is oral questioning on the content of the passage in English, or better, in Latin. This can be used with profit where in the first weeks the author is being read intensively. But the method is much too slow for extensive reading. Among other means are various forms of condensation done in English, or better still, in Latin. For when we work at English as English we gauge comprehension by various forms of written outlines, paraphrases and precis. It would seem good to try the same methods in Latin.

It helps to have a pupil make an outline in Latin of a speech of Cicero. The outline can be topical; it is better if done in complete sentences. It should show the student's grasp of the work as a whole with the proper coordination and subordination of the parts. And this furnishes a good counterstress to the overburdening weight of analysis to which our students are sometimes subjected. It builds up, shows how things hang together, develops the synthetic habit of mind.

The Latin paraphrase can be especially helpful when one is working with a Latin poet, Horace, say, or Virgil. It is the sort of thing Augustine was called upon to do with Virgil: *cogebamur et tale aliquid dicere solutis verbis quale poeta dixisset versibus* (Confessions 1.17). Your modern student can be asked to express in his own words (he will surely speak *solutis verbis*) what an ode of Horace or an episode of Virgil has expressed poetically (*versibus*). Before he can do this he must thoroughly understand the poet. In making the paraphrase he must use the rhythm of prose; the language of prose must replace the poetic expression; plain words must serve for more unfamiliar ones. His paraphrase should be as long, even longer than the original of which it must be a faithful reflection. Nothing should be left out, and the student must be made to work from Latin to Latin in Latin.

When we come to various forms of condensation, the synopsis is perhaps the least difficult. This brief statement of the content is best suited to narrative material. Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* suggest the possibilities for students of Plautus and Terrence. One need not synopsise a whole play at once; it can be done in assignments by act with a careful revision when the whole play has been covered. This sort of exercise would seem to fit the historians too — Caesar, Sallust, Livy, Tacitus. A synopsis of the first three chapters of Book XXI of Livy would show a student's grasp of the background of Punic War II. In a synopsis everything should be left out that does not advance the narrative, nothing omitted that is necessary for the understanding of later happenings.

Most exacting because so exact is the precis. It means what it says. It is practice in *precision*. For that reason it is the most difficult of all the forms of abridgment. When a student is asked to express in 30 Latin words of his own what Cicero has said in 100, both his understanding of Latin and his ability to express himself in it are taxed. He must be helped in the beginning. It will not do to insist too much upon a *Reader's Digest* sort of condensation where an avowed attempt is made to capture not only the thought but even the style and spirit of the author. Modern handbooks of English (Marckwardt for instance) seem to require that the feeling and expression of the original be captured. It will be enough if the Latin student show a thorough grasp of the author's thought and express this clearly, correctly and idiomatically in Latin.

Before he attempts the Latin precis of a passage in a classical author, the student should be sure that he understands everything that is said. Unusual words should be looked up, intricate structure should be analyzed. He should try to formulate the intent of the whole passage in one single Latin sentence. During a careful and intelligent reading, he should make notes (in Latin, of course) of the important points. If he is not satisfied with his notes, he might read the passage once more (preferably after a lapse of some time) and compare his second set of notes with the first set. This will surely give him the important points, an outline really. With these notes before him he should now work out the final copy in his own words with the greatest economy of expression. He will use single words (mostly adjectives and adverbs) for phrases; phrases (largely participial) for clauses; clauses for whole sentences. This done, he can check his work against the author, prune, trim and make a final copy.

But in all this he must work from Latin to Latin in Latin.

C. T. H.

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Book Reviews

A New Introduction to Greek (Revised Edition), by Alston Hurd Chase and Henry Phillips, Jr., Harvard University Press, 1949. Pp. x + 186. \$4.00.

The authors of *A New Introduction to Greek* are not offering this book to supplant other Greek Grammars for beginners, nor are they leveling any criticism at the traditional two-year training in fundamentals. They are out to meet a specific problem rising from the straightened circumstances in which Greek finds itself in our day. The problem is that of the student (college and high-school senior) who has not had or at least did not avail himself of the opportunity to prepare for the reading of Greek literature by way of a high-school course in fundamentals, but now wants Greek; and who, on top of this, with the best of will cannot afford to use up too many semester hours on Greek. If this is not kept in mind the bold objective of the book will probably bring a gasp from the harried high-school drillmaster. For the authors hope to equip the student with enough vocabulary and forms and give him a sufficient conception of the importance of Greek civilization (by way of "live" practice sentences) to make him ready and willing to go after the solid meat of the masters, e.g., Democritus, Plato, Thucydides, and Herodotus. And all this in forty lessons and in one semester of three hours a week!

But *A New Introduction to Greek* is not a nostrum and I am sure that the authors would not have it blurred as "Greek made easy in six months." I think they admit that it is "Greek made hard" by the exigencies of the times. That is why the book is intended for mature students and earnest students and, one should add, for capable students. Reduction of grammar, forms, and vocabulary to bare essentials must have the counterweight of mastery, insight, and faithful retention. It demands ability and hard work to learn Greek in six months.

Of course, the only real question for an earnest student is "Can I do the job with the aid of this book?" Its success suggests the answer. We are offered the fourth edition since 1941.

H. J. G.

The Oxford Classical Dictionary. Edited by M. Cary, J. D. Denniston, J. Wight Duff, A. D. Nock, W. D. Ross, and H. H. Scullard, with the assistance of H. J. Rose, H. P. Harvey, and A. Souter. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1949. Pp. xx + 971.

The preface of this excellent work of scholarly collaboration states that it is intended to cover the same ground as Smith's dictionaries, though on a smaller scale, and is modelled on the eighth edition (1914) of Lubker's *Reallexicon*, with some modifications in principle and interest, being less purely factual and giving more space to biography and literature, less to geography and bibliography. A special feature is the inclusion of comprehensive surveys of the chief disciplines and divisions of the field, e.g., textual criticism, comparative philology, epigraphy, paleography, history of scholarship, and historiography, and there is an appendix containing a useful

schematization of the principal works of reference. In reading the articles on all the main writers I found an unevenness in quality and form ranging from the excellent interpretative discussion of Thucydides by Wade-Gery to the more factual and somewhat disappointing section on Aristophanes by Platnauer. In a field of special interest to me, Greek historiography, I found regret in the fact that Jacoby, who stands alone in this field, did not write the articles on the lesser historians, who are dealt with in perfunctory fashion, the limitations of space notwithstanding. In the case of Hecataeus and Hellanicus, for example, the writer merely cites a number of opinions on them by ancient authors and in neither case does he refer the reader to Jacoby's superb articles on them in RE. But for every such minor failing the book has a hundred major virtues, and in a short time it will be seen on the reference shelf of every library worthy of the name as a witness to the scholarship of its contributors and the foresight and energy of its editors.

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KEVIN HERBERT

The Rhetorical Character Sketch

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G. S. Gordon maintains that under Theophrastus's influence the character, despite its ethical origin, was shaped to rhetorical ends and became a medium for the description, rather than the definition, of types.¹ Through epitomes and imitations conveyed in manuals of rhetoric, the *Characters*, he believes, passed into the medieval curriculum to exert a continuing influence, which, though strongest in the Eastern Empire, was nevertheless a part of Rome's legacy to the conquering barbarians.²

There can be no doubt that Latin writers on the theory of oratory attached great importance to accurate delineation of character; our best witnesses are Quintilian and the unknown compiler of the *Declamationes Minores*, which abound in directions to the student concerning the tone and temper appropriate to the speaker or the light in which the adversary should be represented.³ Ever since the time of Lysias, in fact, there had been a growing demand for fitting the speech of the advocate to the character of the client, and admiration for success in this endeavor was unstinted.

In the surviving Latin manuals, however, there appears to be only one instance of a systematically developed character sketch. This is contained in the anonymous treatise *Ad Herennium* under the classification of *notatio*,⁴ a term for which the following explanation is given: *Notatio est, cum alicuius natura certis describitur signis, quae, sicuti notae quaedam, naturae sunt attributa*. The example is termed a description of a man *non divitem, sed ostentatorem pecuniae*.⁵ We may, however, rightly compare it with Theophrastus's 34th *Character*, *Alazonēia* (Boastfulness), as the summarizing statement indicates:

Huiusmodi notationes, quae describunt, quid consentaneum sit uniuscuiusque naturae, vehementer habent magnam delectationem; totam enim naturam cuiuspiam ponunt ante oculos, aut gloriosi, ut nos, exempli causa, coeperamus, aut invidi, aut timidi, etc.

Detail and lively narrative characterize the sketch. The braggart is depicted as haughty in bearing and contemptuous of others, acting as if he were withholding a largesse which he would bestow if they were an annoyance to him. His gestures aim at display; he supports his chin with his left hand that the bystanders may be dazzled by the resplendence of his jeweled ring. He calls his single slave, Sannio, in a manner to suggest that he is summoning one of a crowd, and bids him arrange for the placing of banqueting couches at home, or ask his master's uncle for the attendance of an Ethiopian slave at the baths, or make room for a spirited horse in the stable. Then he orders a sum of money to be counted out, if possible, before nightfall; and to the slave, who, humoring this fancy, avers that the task will then require more hands, he gives instructions to set Libanus and Sosia at the work also.

At this point two men arrive on the scene who have previously entertained him in the course of his travels. He professes delight at seeing them, but surprise that they had not gone directly to his house. When they reply that they would have done so if they had known where he lived, he says smugly that anyone whom they asked could have furnished the information. They set off, ostensibly for his home, and he makes their progress the occasion for tales about the destruction of certain of his farm dwellings by fire, his reluctance to rebuild, his mad decision to restore one structure near Tusculum on the very foundations of the old. Reaching a building in which an eating club is scheduled to banquet later in the day, the braggart, taking advantage of his acquaintance with the owner, leads his guests inside, announces that this is his home, looks over the arrangement of the couches and the disposition of the silver plate with critical approval, and remains unshaken in his aplomb even after a slave informs him privately that the owner will join them in a few moments. He evades disclosure by reporting, as if just notified to that effect, that his brother has arrived from Salernum, and, saying that he must be off to extend a welcome, bids his guests return in time for dinner. When they do so, they are ridiculed by the club members and depart to seek lodgings at an inn.

Next day, encountering their deceiver, they expostulate and accuse, but he insists that, mistaking the location of the house, they had gotten into the next alley, while he, to the detriment of his health, had waited up for them until a late hour. Meantime Sannio has been employing the interval between the first and the second meeting to carry out his assignment of borrowing table service, coverlets, and slaves. When the boaster reaches his real home with his companions, everything is in order. He explains the shift of locale by stating that he has given up his big house to a friend for a wedding. When an anxious lender reclaims his silver plate, he pretends that the demand is being made by this same friend, and after a show of impatience at the importunity of one who is not content with the loan of house and slaves, magnanimously dispatches the silver service, saying that they will eat with quite as complete enjoyment off Samian ware. Here the sketch ends abruptly with the observation that it would hardly be possible to narrate in a year the full extent of such a man's braggart behavior for a day.

Comparison with Theophrastus's character of the boaster reveals almost no resemblance, even of particulars. In the Greek sketch the braggart dilates upon his profits from merchant cargoes; sends his slave off to the bank, where he has only a pittance on deposit; recounts his military exploits abroad and enumerates the booty with which he had enriched himself; claims to have been thrice invited by Antipater to settle in Macedonia; gives a circumstantial report of his generosity in relieving a famine; examines, and pretends to be desirous of buying, thoroughbred horses or expensive garments, but resigns his intentions, ostensibly because his slave has not brought the gold for which he was sent; and, asserting ownership of his rented dwelling, announces that he plans to put it up for sale because he needs larger quarters in which to entertain.

Quite plainly, if the Latin sketch is not original with the author of the *Ad Herennium*, it is drawn from some other source than Theophrastus. A salient point of difference is the elaboration of the narrative element in the *Ad Herennium*, which strongly suggests the influence of comic plot. This is, on the face of it, a later development, and diverges widely from the simple pithy indications of traits or behavior which are found in the character while it remained more intimately associated with a philosophical context.

¹"Theophrastus and His Imitators," in *English Literature and the Classics*, coll. G. S. Gordon (Oxford, 1912), p. 55.

²*Ibid.*, p. 65.

³In the *sermo* or prose instructions accompanying the outline of the speech.

⁴IV, 50, 63-51, 64.

⁵*Loc. cit.*

From Latin to the Romance Languages

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The eight Romance languages are all the offsprings of a grandsire whose provenience can scarcely be questioned. The very word from which their name is derived, *Romanice*, indicates their origin, inasmuch as the phrase *Romanice loqui* means: to speak after the fashion of the Romans. The languages fashioned after that of the Romans are Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Provençal, Roumanian, Corsican, Engadine or Rheto-Romance, and, with fear and trembling as well as with reservations, we must not omit the mention of English.

If we ask ourselves just what it was that the Romans spoke, we find that they had two parallel languages, Vulgar and Classical Latin, the former being spoken, at least, by the masses, and the latter developing into the highly refined and somewhat artificial written language known to most of us as the literary Latin of Virgil, Cicero, and the other writers of ancient Rome. It is the popular language or Vulgar Latin, carried by the conquering legionnaires and colonists to foreign lands, that formed the basis of the neo-Latin tongues. However, it would be folly to minimize the rôle played by Classical Latin in the development of the eight Romance languages. For example, while the Spaniards evolved

their word *cueva*, a cave or cellar, from the hypothetical form *c-o-v-a*, as likewise did the Portuguese their *cova*, we find the Italian *cava*, the French *cave* and the Provençal *cava* developing from the classical form *cava*. Numerous are the examples of this type. Another point to be born in mind is that one must not confuse the Vulgar Latin of the Classical period with the written language of the decadent Empire nor with the Low Latin of the Middle Ages, because even though these latter had changed greatly from the written speech of the Classical period, they nevertheless retained, graphically, at least, a great resemblance to it. And finally, to complete the picture, we must remember that some Vulgar Latin words that resembled those of the Classical period in spelling differed from them in accentuation, and consequently, had an entirely different Romance development: *filiolus* (Cl. *filiolus*) gave the forms *figliuolo* in Italian, *filleul* in French, and *hijuelo* in Spanish. The same may be said of *mulierem* (Cl. *mulierem*).

The Romance languages began to exist when the Vulgar Latin spoken in the various sections of Europe under discussion began to show geographical divergences, that is, in the sixth and seventh centuries A. D. Many theories have been brought forward to explain these divergences and each one of them has beaten the path nearer the right solution, but, as yet, the last word has not been said. Some of the fundamental, well-known factors are temporal, regional, ancestral, natural, physiological, psychological, and historical. But it is the writer's opinion that the most important of all, the one that absorbs all others, that explains the development of each separate language into its present stage, and points the way to all future changes, is the innate, basic human principle of following the path of least resistance. Purists may urge people to say *it is not* instead of *'taint*, but the first has three syllables and the latter has only one. *Est-ce que vous êtes prêts* may be better French than *ça y est*, but the Academicians sit in their *fauteuils* when they deliberate matters of language and have plenty of time at their disposal, since they are *les immortels*, — which is not true of French children at their games or of workers on their jobs. The Italians may still stick to their *la-van-de-ria* and the French to their *la-van-drie*, but practical John Bull prefers to wash his linen in his own laundry.

It matters but little whether one discusses phonological, morphological, or syntactic changes, the desire to follow the path of least resistance seems to operate everywhere. Generally speaking, the stressed part of a word or sentence is the part that remains, the rest being less important, becomes insignificant, is slurred over, and soon lost sight of. Consequently, we must not forget that speech in general does not consist of isolated words; rather we utter our ideas in thought or breath groups, modulated in some sort of rhythm, and fortunate are those words or parts of words that receive the stress. They may change to meet the strain, but they survive; the others do not. Let us take a simple example. *Illa illam videt*, or rather, the Vulgar Latin *ella ella(m) vedet*. The first part of the first word is attacked with emphasis, hence it remains, becoming in French *elle*, in Italian *ella*, and in Spanish *ella*. The changing of final

a to *e* in French, its retention in Italian and Spanish, and the palatization of the double *ll* in Spanish could be explained individually. We shall not do so for the sake of brevity. The first part of the second *ella(m)*, however, is slurred, thus allowing the second part to receive the stress; hence it remains as *la* in the three languages mentioned. *Vedet* develops simply in Italian, resulting in *vede*. In French its development is logical and easily followed, but not so simple. Here, the first free and stressed close *e* regularly gives *ei* at first and then develops into *oi*. The second *e*, however, being unstressed, is lost early in the process, thus leaving together the voiced and unvoiced dentals *d t*. Under such circumstances, the slightest attempt at pronouncing *dt* will show how natural it is for the position of the tongue, anticipating the formation of the unvoiced *t*, to slip into the latter position just long enough before it should to neglect the *d*, and thus we have as a result, really, two *t's* which in French simplify into one. In Spanish the word *vedet* develops under a different path of least resistance. The preference of Spanish for softened consonants is well known. For instance *Usted, Ustede, Usté(d), sapere, saber, vita, vida*. Now, in the case of an already voiced consonant in the intervocalic position the tendency would be to disappear altogether, and that is exactly what happened to the *d* of *vedet*. It was lost, with the resulting word *v-e-e* assimilating the two contiguous *e's* into one. So we have the form *ve*. In Spanish as well as in Italian, the final consonants of a word are generally lost. Returning, then, to our illustration *ella ella(m) vedet*, we find it to become *ella la vede* in Italian, *elle la voit* in French, and *ella la ve* in Spanish. We shall leave out the other five Romance languages, for the sake of following the path of least resistance and for economy of space as well.

Next to phonological changes, the most important metamorphosis undergone by Latin as it became our neo-Latin was in morphology; and here again the principle we have laid down of following the path of least resistance is still operative. If we recall correctly, Classical Latin shows fifty-two different case uses. It is a large number, as those who spoke the language soon discovered. Consequently, they gradually began to make use of prepositional constructions which ultimately reduced the number of cases in use to two: the nominative and the accusative, or rather, an accusative-ablative case. This simplified matters very much. Plautus, in his desire to make his characters speak according to their rank, has written for us the following phrase *hunc ad carneficem dabo*. In another case, an old inscription shows the following legend: *curator de via sacra*. This process whereby a grammatical relation is shown not by a change in the form of the word, but by the use of a separate word, that is, the shift from the synthetic to the analytic method of showing grammatical relations was adopted by the Romance languages as being less ambiguous and more expedient.

A strong desire to standardize, that is, to follow the path of least resistance, likewise made itself felt very early in connection with inflectional forms that were felt to be no longer necessary. It was operative in the gradual abandonment of case and tense forms, in abolishing the

neuter gender, and like simplifications. In fact, already in Vulgar Latin the five classical declensions had become reduced to three, the first, the second and the third, the fourth and fifth having been absorbed in the others. Also, the passive voice was felt as inadequate. The Romance languages, therefore substituted for it a periphrasis whose passive meaning was much more definite than the synthetic Latin construction: *amatur* > *amatus est* and from that *é amato*, *il est aimé* and *es amado*; *dicitur* > *se dicit* giving in Romance *si dice*, *se dit* and *se dice*. The Latins likewise developed a dislike for the future tense. It may have been because it was confused with other forms, such as the imperfect *amabam*, or, in the third and fourth conjugations with the present subjunctive: *capiam audiam* and *tegam*. Whatever the cause, several periphrastic constructions replaced it at first, such as, *facturus sum*, *debeo facere*, *volo facere* and *habere (ad) facere*. Of all these, *facere habeo* prevailed and consequently, today, the neo-Latin tongues have for their future: *facerò* (modern *farò*) in Italian, *ferai* in French, and *haré* in Spanish. Interestingly and curiously enough, the Latin future has left no traces whatsoever in the Romance languages, except the second person singular of the verb to be, *eris* which persists in Spanish, not as a future tense, however, but as a present, *eres*, thou art.

Another strong force operating in the transformation of Latin into Romance languages has been analogy, that is, the development of words not according to their phonological or morphological laws, but under the influence of similar words or forms. For example, analogy has operated in the transfer of a word or class of words from one declension to another. The plural of *folium*, that is, *folia* was taken as a feminine singular noun in *a* and consequently a neutral plural word was adopted into the first declension, giving in Romance: *foglia*, *feuille*, and *hoja*. But *folium* does remain as *foglio* in Italian. The neutral plural *pecora*, from *pecus* represents another of these transfers. Analogy plays an even more important rôle in the formation of the new personal endings of the verbs. But again following the path of least resistance, we shall omit its discussion, since it is too intricate for a brief paper.

Our references to the word *pecora* leads us to examine another field of development, one that borders closely on semantics. For instance, in France the ordinary word for sheep is *brébis* from the Classical Latin *vervecem* which, in turn, is akin to the Vulgar *berbecem*. This same word is found in the archaic Italian *berbice*. But there is another word associated with sheep or lamb, *agnellum* which still exists as *agneau* in French, *agnello* in Italian, and *añojo* in Spanish. Finally, we find still another word for sheep, *ovem* + *icula* and which is found in Spanish as *oveja* and in French as *ouaille* (modern *ouaille*). Were we to ask an ordinary Frenchman, Italian or Spaniard their equivalent for the word sheep, we would receive as their answers: *brébis*, *pecora*, *oveja* respectively. Why three different words for a term that could have easily been alike in all three languages? It is curious, but our interest would be aroused even more, were we to enter three different churches in which we

might respectively hear a Frenchman, an Italian and a Spaniard preach. The first of these referring to the Good Shepherd and His flock would say *ses brébis* or *ses ouaille*; the second, *le sue pecorelle*; and the third, *su rebaño*. Is it not curious that not even the generally unifying force of the Gospels and the Church have been able to create a common phraseology in this respect?

From the very beginning of our discussion, we have laid a great deal of stress on the provenience of the neo-Latin languages from Vulgar Latin, and with one exception, we have referred to Classical Latin only indirectly. Are we to deduce from this that the Romance languages are divorced from the languages of Classical literature? Not at all. The contributions made by learned individuals to the dictionaries of the various neo-Latin languages are innumerable. If we could stop to count, how many words do you suppose have the clerics, scholars, priests, poets, in short, all the educated class of the last thousand years or so derived from literary Latin and added to the language of their own country? The so-called learned words, or words introduced from Classical Latin into the Romance languages are countless. We shall merely mention a few of them, remembering, at the same time the fundamental law that governs their development, namely, they are free from phonological or morphological changes only up to the time of their introduction, and consequently, are likely to retain a form much closer to the original Latin, but if they really become popular, then from that time on, they submit themselves to all the philological laws that govern the development of the languages in question. A few of these words are: In Italian: *fedele*, *erede*, *regola*, *rigido*, *pegola*, *semplice*, *spera*, *dote*, *dubbio*, *subito*, *causa*, *accumulare*; in French: *captif*, *obscur*, *métal*, *nature*, *idée*, *fraude*, *prudent*, *admirer*, *légende*, *région*, *légion*; in Spanish: *centro*, *gente*, *libro*, *continuo*, *nota*, *numero*, *cruz*, *persona*, *angel*. Most of these words are currently used among the scarcely literate. What a tremendous list one could compile if one chose to include words that one might expect only the educated to understand and use!

The classical authors have continually been a mine or storehouse from which the modern languages have drawn whenever the wealth of the popular speech has been insufficient to supply linguistic means with which to express ideas that have been momentous in the history of modern culture; and unfortunate, indeed, is that individual who, considering himself cultured, is ignorant of the real sources whence they sprang. Those schools that were epoch-making in the history of Italian, French, and Spanish literature have borrowed heavily from the classics of ancient Rome. Two of these have been the school of the Sweet New Style (*dolce stil nuovo*) in Italy, of which Dante, himself, proved to be the culminating point, and the *Pléiade* in France, which produced poetry unequalled in warmth of feeling until the Romantics of the early nineteenth century picked up the torch of personal inspiration where Ronsard and Du Bellay had left it. Dante did not choose Virgil as his guide through the greatest literary journey that man has ever made for no reason at all:

"Art thou then that Virgil and that fount which pours forth so broad a stream of speech?" replied I with bashful front to him: "O honor and light of the other poets! May the long study avail me and the great love, which have made me search thy volume! Thou art my master and my author; thou alone art he from whom I took the fair style that has done me honor."

At the beginning of this paper we stated that one must not overlook the fact that English has gained a great deal from the speech of the ancient Romans. Let us see close at hand just what was meant by the statement. The English version of the memorable tribute that Dante paid to Virgil which we have just quoted, comes from Charles Eliot Norton's translation of the *Divina Commedia*. The Anglo-Saxon ring of this translation is very evident, and must be borne in mind. And yet let us examine its Latinity. The passage contains 53 different words of which 15 or 28 percent are of Latin origin. This in itself is an excellent percentage. It could be increased considerably if we were to weigh their relative importance. We shall overlook it, however, in order to point out a more important fact. It is the following: often, the justifiable claim is made that English is one of the richest languages known. Now, we must take the claim to mean that English possesses sufficient words to express the most delicate and exact shade of meaning and distinctions that may come to one's mind or soul. That is, if one word will not just quite do, there exists a synonym that can take its place. Then, the wealth of the English language depends on its wealth of syno-

nymy. If such is the case, a very interesting fact comes to light when we open Webster's unabridged *New International Dictionary* and examine the wealth of synonyms that are given for those words of the above quotation that are not of Latin origin, (less significant words, such as pronouns, preposition and conjunctions have been omitted for obvious reasons.) *Broad*: large, ample, expansive, tolerant, roomy, wide, thick (4 to 3). *Stream*: current (1 to 0). *Speech*: oration, harangue, language, address (4 to 0). *Light*: conspicuous, model, example (3 to 0). *Great*: large, enormous, monstrous, capacious: broad (4 to 1). *Love*: passion, sentiment, emotion; attachment, feeling, like (3 to 3). *Have*: possess; hold, own (1 to 2). *Made*: constrain, compel, cause (3 to 0). *Alone*: isolated, solitary, separate, unaccompanied, companionless, exclusive (6 to 0). *Took*: receive, accept, adopt (3 to 0). *Fair*: gracious, pleasing, pleasant agreeable; comely (4 to 1). The surprising total of the above figures is 36 to 10, that is, for every synonym from non-Latin sources English possesses 3.6 derived from the speech of ancient Rome.

In conclusion, it may be said that the brief summary given above shows not only the metamorphosis of Latin into the Romance languages, but also into English; and were we to delete all the words of Latin origin from the works of a Shakespeare, a Milton, or from our Declaration of Independence, we would have left a hodge-podge of words reduced to about a third of their original number and signifying nothing.

CLASSICAL ESSAYS PRESENTED TO JAMES A. KLEIST, S.J.

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION BY RICHARD E. ARNOLD, S.J.

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